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English Class Course Projects

English, Department of

12-15-2020

Literature and Environment: Imaginative Interventions in the Climate Crisis

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Recommended Citation

Demsey, Anna; Barnicle, Drew; Butler, Grace; Stroh, Kelly; Witt, Emilia; Yoshioka, Karey; Morgan, Yuki; and Edmunds, Anna, "Literature and Environment: Imaginative Interventions in the Climate Crisis" (2020). *English Class Course Projects*. 2.
<https://soundideas.pugetsound.edu/englishcourses/2>

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24 Hours

By Anna Demsey

00:00

Tick...Tick...

Brilliant beams of light stream above above you, bright against the dark sky, white streams of cosmos crashing to the ground. Dazzling fire erupts from the rocks, red and glorious and *hot*. The ground is black but the sky is shining. This is your earth, your ground, your home. You are invisible between the rocks, the volcanos, the stars, but you are the dust and fragments of the ether. The earth is alive before it even knows what life means. *Tick...Tick...*

01:00

The ground explodes below you, shaking you to your core and blowing you into thousands of pieces. Fire and rocks erupt from everywhere, becoming the atmosphere and spinning the ground. Your fingernails become a part of the sky, collecting with debris from the planet that collided and fragments of the earth. There is nothing left but vapor, and your being becomes the toxic air. It doesn't matter though. It is still the early hours of the day.

02:00

Tick...

Slowly, you reemerge as world begins to recover. The ground is still again, and an orb as bright as the stars circles the spinning planet. Second by second, you are hot and cold as you will be for the rest of the day.

03:00

This is a different place than it was an hour ago. The ground is grey and barren, and much colder. You are the moon, the rocks, the air, but your fingertips feel something new. You play in the water, filled with the minerals of your cells. It thunders through the early morning, electricity pulsing through the sky.

04:00

Minutes pass and you begin to feel something new. Tiny cells discover what it means to be alive. You love them as you loved the fire of midnight.

05:00

You swim through the ocean, diving to the depths and exploring caves miles and miles below the surface. You watch the sun shimmer above the water, dazzling and blue. This is the most peaceful hour, before dawn. You let yourself dissolve into the water, spreading your being across the globe. Minutes and seconds pass, forgetting about the microbes, forgetting about you. That's alright.

06:00

Day breaks.

07:00

08:00

The world is beautiful, but nothing changes. You want to see something happen, to experience new wonders.

09:00

Tick...tick...

10:00

The cells multiply faster now, but still you want to be dazzled by the day.

11:00

You spread out on the beaches of the world and absorb the sun.

Noon

You begin to exhale oxygen into the atmosphere. Fill your enormous, invisible lungs with toxins. Exhale.

13:00

The world becomes a paradise for your little cells.

14:00

The day passes slowly.

15:00

Tick..tick...

16:00

17:00

18:00

The sun is setting now. **19:00**

Tick... Tick...

20:00

Seaweed begins to grow, plankton and algae covering the rocky coves of the ocean. Plants fill the empty ocean, growing from the cracks between the pebbles. They reach towards the sunlight above the water. You love the electric shock of your jellyfish and the colors of coral.

21:00

Fish start to make their way towards land, growing legs and crawling onto the beaches. You help them find their feet and learn how to walk, how to fly, how to eat the plants growing in the dirt, how to eat each other.

22:00

You ride on the backs of giant dragonflies, soaring through towering trees that grew in the span of minutes. The wonders of these wild critters is what you've waited all day for, the hours of passing time. Yes, this is what the earth was meant to be. As the hour passes, new creatures evolve. You walk with the stegosauruses and fly with the pterodactyls. The world is hot. You are the droplets of humidity in the air and in the waterfalls. The earth is perfect, a perennial cycle of life for perfect creatures. Small, hairy animals join the ecosystem, seconds until the clock strikes eleven.

23:00

Tick...tick...

You remember that time is the enemy as the earth begins to freeze. Your wonderful dinosaurs begin to die, and then are gone all together. They were not made for this cold climate, and you mourn them for half of the hour, crying into the rivers. You feel lonely

again. Mammals come to you and remind you that you are not alone. *Tick...tick...* you love your fish, your elephants, your ants. You love them all.

There are five seconds until midnight...

Four...

The apes are evolving. They seem to think that they know everything, but worship unknown Gods. They're better at surviving than your dinosaurs, making tools for their use and growing their own food. They'll be around for longer. They'll be your friends.

Three..

No, perhaps this isn't what the earth was meant to be. Perhaps the earth was meant to be the earth, from dawn until dusk, every second. The earth was meant to be the chaos of volcanoes and the peace of paradise. These beings are friends to no one.

Two...

Humans have covered the world in grey dirt, the bright green trees of the morning disappearing into brown. It is not just the coming midnight that puts the world into darkness because the stars are duller now and the earth is alight with the fluorescent white of their horrible buildings. The once beautiful ground is covered by water, and everything is drowning. Your animals are dying. Airplanes appear in the sky--they look like the shooting stars of the beginning. But they are much slower, much less dazzling. Humans move much too fast to see that they have only been around for three seconds. They don't understand that they are running out of air. You choke on their smog. You try to tell them that they are dying, but they can't hear you over their motors and engines and electric wires. Nor would they care. You want to tell them that they don't matter, because you've seen the world through the day and it is not theirs, it's yours, and they are destroying it in seconds. Don't they know that it was once beautiful? Don't they know that you saw electricity in the lightning storms this morning, that they did not invent fire because you saw it hours ago, before they existed, before their ancestors' ancestors were born. You remember wishing to see change faster this morning, but you did not mean the destruction of everything in a matter of seconds. How dare they think that they can control and own the world like Gods, when they have only seen the world in the time it takes to blink an eye. You could not have dreamed of the chaos and destruction that they have brought, even when a planet crashed into you and split you into atoms. You are a part of the moon that they are so proud to call theirs, but how can anything be theirs when they are killing *everything*. Don't they know that they will die? You wonder if they destroy the earth, will you die too?

One...

Untitled
By Drew Barnicle

Day 0:

“Sir did you have a location in mind?”

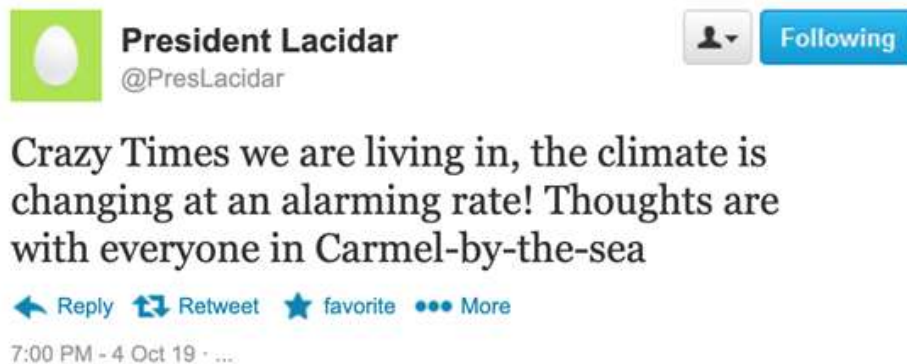
“Carmel-By-The-Sea,” said the newly appointed president, placing a green pin on the map in the location of the beach town.



October 3rd was the day that I remember seeing an unusual amount of men and women running around town, I didn't pay them much; we get a lot of tourists typically so large masses of unfamiliar faces wondering about downtown is nothing new. I guess looking back it was odd that they were there in October, were a beach town you see so tourists are nothing new. I hadn't noticed them putting up all those cameras, again the day wasn't really out of the ordinary so I wasn't really noticing much going on outside bringing the kids to school and not being late for work. I probably would have paid more attention had I known what was about to happen.

Day 1: October 4th is the first day I remember, how could I not it was the day the sea rose past the beach. Everyone who worked on the pier that morning went to work and found the pier and the first floor of their workplaces to be covered in about about a foot of water. I actually was taking the kids to the beach that day I remember because I had gone downstairs to make breakfast and Diane was still sitting there glued to the TV, usually she would have been at work at that point. I figured it would have had something to do with the recent inauguration of President Lacidar, but no it was images and reports of the flooded buildings and the sea level being unreasonably high. The rise didn't affect us directly, other than not being able to go to the beach as it was under water. The craziest part though was the water rose all day, slowly but steadily till the pier wasn't visible at all. We had a couple friends come move in with us that day because they lived

on the waterfront. It was a weird day, the TV reporters were saying something about global warming resulting in climate change but they didn't think it could happen so fast. By 5pm the water had stopped rising and was just sitting about 6 feet higher than it had been before. There was a lot of confusion that day but it really was mellow compared to what happened the next day.



Day 2: The smell of smoke woke me up two hours early that morning, I remember that very vividly. I remember opening my eyes to a thick layer of gray covering everything I could see. I checked my phone and I had a notification for an air quality warning in our area. I remember thinking no shit this is awful. We were used to the occasional smoky morning, forest fires in California are not uncommon. But something about this was different, it completely enveloped the room and there was a thick layer of ash covering everything in the room. The ash dampened all sound and when I pulled the blankets off of myself a pile of ashes fell onto the ground. I was beginning to get really freaked out, with this amount of ash I knew the fire had to be close. I jumped out of bed and ran to our east facing window, looking out I could see smoke billowing out of the forest about 5 miles away. I was relieved that it wasn't as close as I had thought but still it was closer than anything had been before. I woke Diane up and told her we should close up the house and pack up our valuables as we could very likely be evacuating pretty soon, pointing out the window at the fires. Then I wondered around the house waking up the other families that had already been displaced by the sea level rise. Most of them were awake and I told those that weren't about the fires and said they may want to get ready to move again as they weren't very far away. The town was pretty much shut down that day, nobody really left their house and we just sat around in the house all day watching the news intently waiting to be told to evacuate. By the end of the day the order never came and the news was reporting that the fires were not gone but they were contained and anyone not already evacuated would likely not have to. Right before going to bed that night all of our phones went crazy, it was one of those severe weather alerts. I remember thinking no shit, two days late. But it was another beast

altogether, it warned of a hurricane headed are way and should reach us by mid morning tomorrow.



Day 3: The whole house barely slept that night, the howling wind kept almost everyone awake. It was clear there was an impending storm that morning, the sky was a dark brooding mass of clouds. I ran around and double checked that every window was latched shut and that nobody, in our now very full house was hanging out around the windows just in case the storm was strong enough to throw something into them. They said it was a category three hurricane, luckily nothing in or on the house was broken. We spent that entire day hunkered down inside grimacing at the noises going on outside, each of us randomly getting up to hazard a look out the window at what was going on. I looked around 1PM and remember seeing small trees ripped out of the ground and all the branches of the bigger ones being blowing around. The car windows had all been broken by the swirling branches and it was half way full of water. At around 7PM I remember hearing a huge crash and then the whole house seemingly sank down a few inches. Later we realized that it was because our redwood in the back had fallen on the house. Everyone finally crawled into our sleeping bags in the living room around midnight hoping the storm would be over by morning.



That was the craziest part it was just all completely calm when we woke up the next day. I mean it was obvious all these natural disasters had happened and there was

a lot of cleaning up to do, but just as suddenly as they started they stopped. It was an eerie time, many people here and all over the states believe that it wasn't just random and it was somehow controlled by the new government under Lacidar. I think that's a bit absurd, no government can control the weather.



Empty Wombs and Early Tombs: How the Climate Crisis is Shaping Youth

By Grace Butler

Does the climate crisis inspire change in your daily actions? Has it impacted your choice in a career? Have you reconsidered family planning? Does it have a significant impact on your mental health? Do you see the climate changing now, in your home community, in the news, across the world, and what feelings arise as you see this? Do you feel hopeless? Responsible? Static? Encouraged to provoke change?

These are the questions that I asked on my social media feeds to a wide array of people. Each follower has their own lived experience, intersections of identities, narratives, and connections to the climate crisis. I made space for people to share their frustrations with those in power, for people to grieve the loss of potential childbearing, for solidarity in an isolating experience.

I received 54 responses in total from Facebook friends and Instagram followers who responded if they felt comfortable sharing their personal connection to the climate crisis. I have a half-formed theory that these people weren't really responding to me, but wanted instead a space to put their anxieties that wasn't just their brain. They wanted someone to listen to them, to make them feel heard, and to know that others around them feel helpless as well.

Out of these 54 responses, I received only 3 from people who identify as men.

"The climate crisis has definitely contributed to my depression!" "Every time I go home to the islands, the ocean creeps ever closer to my family's home." "I've completely shifted what I want to study long term! It's agricultural biology!"

The rest of the people who voiced their fears were womxn and femmes. All of their anxieties seeped into my phone, my inbox, and my messages. Each one contained the same three ideas: it is now unethical and unthinkable for people to have children although they previously wanted to, their career paths completely changed to be connected to the environment in some capacity, and they feel as if they have partial responsibility to individually minimize their impact.

“I see the gendered aspects of climate change represented in weather patterns and increased catastrophic weather events (i.e. tornados, hurricanes, windstorms, snowstorms, etc.) and how they are synonymous with how we (society) view women and hormones. Erratic, crazed, and uncontrollable.” “I really want to be a parent but I worry that it is selfish to bring children into this world. I feel lucky that I don’t have to make this decision yet.” “I am subconsciously angry at my parents for not doing more, knowing that my sisters and I’s lives are on the line. Everything I purchase, everything I wear, and everything I eat I am cautious of and the effects it can have on not just the environment, but my personal health and safety.” “I really want to have kids and have always wanted to be a mother but I feel like I cannot.” “Majoring in environmental science is depressing and you think the climate crisis would ensure job security, but it doesn’t! And looking for a job makes me feel like I chose the wrong path.”

People opened up to me, someone on the other side of the screen, about their own vulnerabilities. Their innermost thoughts about the climate crisis seeped out and onto a screen. Is it easier to type than to say out loud? What privilege is associated with being vocal online but not in person? Are all people silently preparing for an apocalyptic state? The climate crisis is an active force in socialization. The climate is shaping people and their lives in preparation for the end of life as we know it.

Why do the womxn and femmes I know have the greatest connection to the earth dying? Where were the rest of the men that follow me and are friends with me? Where were their voices? Is there a lack of responsibility and accountability that falls on womxn and femmes to shoulder? Is it connected to the concept of Mother Earth, and as a friend pointed out, the way society views women as erratic and uncontrolled?

All of these questions represent the volatility and uncertainty of the current environmental state. We need concrete policy, action, and mitigation if there is hope of a future life. We need to prioritize future generations and pass down an environment in which they can grow, play, and live. Currently, young people around us are scared for the environment that they depend on. They are scared for their homes being washed away, their communities lost, the future of their jobs, and the emptiness of their womb.

I’m scared for the future of my loved ones. I’ve heard the idea that when making decisions for the betterment of life, one needs to consider seven generations ahead. I wonder where that thought was when current and past leaders chose to actively invest millions and billions of dollars in fossil fuels. Millions and billions of dollars in wars. Millions and billions of dollars of silencing and ignoring the cries and pleas of their people. Why don’t leaders in the Global North, the countries responsible for the majority of emissions, realize how much the people living in their countries are already being hurt?

Not only are leaders and politicians turning away from pleading voices, but they are turning away from those who are being presently harmed the most as the climate crisis progresses: marginalized communities.

“My tribe hasn’t been able to access our traditional lands and resources because of wildfires.” “I’m low-SES [socioeconomic status] and I’m already not able to adapt, so I’m scared for what will happen in the future as stuff gets worse. I already can’t afford products such as metal straws or beeswax wraps. How will I be able to afford whatever comes next?” “I’m a black woman. Climate change obviously isn’t the scariest thing about living in America right now, but it definitely shows political apathy and disregard. It’s scary to be black and a woman in the US, but it’s even scarier when your government, that was built off of exploitation of your ancestors, is ignoring three of your identities. I’m black, a woman, and live in the US. Why can’t our politicians prioritize their people over money?”

People of marginalized identities and from these communities are systemically disenfranchised when it comes to access to resources. Specifically in the United States, where all of my responders live, the systems that were created don’t support marginalized folks. The United States was founded on systems of white supremacy, colonialism, and capitalism. These systems continue to be furthered by those in charge who chose to ignore the climate crisis, while marginalized folks continue to be left out and ignored.

It’s clear that there is an insurmountable anxiety and fear surrounding the climate crisis. Our peers, family, friends, acquaintances, are all petrified for the future and are deliberately changing their futures in anticipation of the end of society as we know it. We need political action! We need drastic intervention! We need immediate mitigation and to end global capitalism! The climate crisis is shaping how we grow up. It is an active force of socialization, and just further proves that the crisis is now. It’s not a future event.

I want to thank all of the people who responded. They were vulnerable about their innermost fears and anxieties that are directly related to their identities and personhood. It was such a humbling experience to have my loved ones express the ways they are being forced to adapt. It wouldn’t be fair to allow them to be vulnerable without being vulnerable myself.

I have decided to not be a mother because I think it’s unethical to bring a child into this world given that their world will soon be damaged. I have changed my career path to focus on equitable environmental sustainability and planning. I am low-SES, and am afraid for my and my parent’s inability to adapt currently and in the future. I am scared for my loved ones, for my communities, for those I don’t even know. I try to walk or bus everywhere, cut out dairy and a lot of meat, use metal straws, use tupperware, and more products targeted at the consumer level. I’ve stopped saving money and planning for long term plans. I’ve decided to travel all next summer instead of working to get an internship because I know that my future is mostly obsolete. But how can individual actions correct an issue that is so much larger than us? How can one person mitigate climate change when its cause is the systems we live in?

We are all being forced to change our lifestyles because of the climate crisis. All of us but those in charge. However, at the end of the day, when we’ve exhausted our natural environment

and our people to their ends, all the money in the world won't protect leaders from the results of their inactivity and exploitation.

Season of the *Sawah*

By Kelly Stroh

Visions of blinding white stun Adam's senses for a brief moment, forcing him to stop and wipe his sweaty brow. The blazing tropic sun beats heavily down upon him, the air full of so much humidity his lungs feel like they are drowning. Squinting from the sun's reflection on the white rock around him, Adam takes a seat, rubbing his eyes that burn from the dust particles of limestone that suffocate the air.

"No breaks, Adam!" his partner exclaims before throwing his pickaxe down against the bright rock that illuminate the cliffside. The ground shakes beneath Adam as his partner hits surface again, successfully breaking the limestone. Adam stares at the chunk of broken sedimentary, its edges jagged and sharp like a trailing scar. Adam looks away before noticing a woman lingering at the edge of the mining zone.

"How long has she been standing there?" he asks, recognizing her. She is the same woman who has been watching them for weeks.

"About 20 minutes, now," his partner huffs, stopping to look at the woman as well. "Her name is Dewi and she lives in the village by the rice paddy. I don't know what her problem is-- she just keeps staring at us. We should tell the Captain, she has no right to be here."

The pickaxe hits the ground yet again, earning another earth-shattering crack. Adam watches the woman flinch with every strike, wiping tears from her eyes as if she, too, feels the pain of the pickaxe. "What do you mean?" Adam asks, "She has every right to be here. We are on her land--this is her rock," he continues, gesturing towards the surrounding white sediment.

"They aren't using all of it! And they have so much--it's fine," his partner assures. Another strike.

Adam watches as the woman stands up, wiping her grieving face once more before heading towards black walls of the nearby temple. "I'll be right back," he informs, curious, and despite the protesting cries of his partner behind him, Adam follows the woman.

He approaches the temple—a massive black stone structure looming before him, guarded by two huge, carved stone cows, one of which he touches. However, the lava stone had been soaking up the burning heat of the sun the entire day and Adam cries out in pain, instantly removing his hand. Although Adam knows he should probably have heeded that as some sort of divine warning, he looks up once again entryway before him, climbing up the steps before pushing the gate open.

It is very quiet inside--Adam hears nothing except for the creak of the gate closing behind him. Walls of lava stone enclose the space around him as he takes his first step forward, realizing that the temple is a lot larger than he anticipated. Inside, he sees that the massive plot is separated

by various roofed platforms that house idols and incense--almost like different rooms. While some are hidden behind inner walls, others are wide open for him to see.

Adam continues to sweat, noticing that the brutal heat is even stronger here than outside. He wipes his brow and takes another step forward, walking towards the gargoyle-like statue carved out of the same dark stone. The carved figure is decorated with a crown of flowers and is holding a sword. He wonders if they are the protectors of the temple, and if so, what exactly do they protect? He comes face-to-face with its wide eyes and bared fangs and uses his finger to trace the long tongue which spills out of its open mouth. The hairs on Adam's neck tingle and he looks around, sensing someone watching him. But there is no one. Only dozens upon dozens of these protective, terrifying statues with cold, black eyes that cut through him.

The scent of incense saturates the air. It is a light scent, not floral but still smells of the earth. Following it, Adam soon sees trails of dancing smoke coming from one of the roofed, temple platforms. He vaguely remembers the Captain informing the entire mining team that these structures are called *bale*'s. Adam turns the corner in order to see the interior of the *bale* more clearly. While the walls of the platform are made of the same lava rock as the rest of the temple, dark wooden pillars of marabou support the manicured, thatched roof. Adam sees the woman, dressed in white with a bright yellow sash tied around her waist. She is on her knees with her hands pressed together and raised above her head, holding broken flower petals between her index fingers. Knelt before an altar clothed in gold material, the woman's eyes are pressed shut, her lips murmuring words in a language Adam does not understand. He looks to the statues that guard the *bale* and wonders about their authority and their place in this world. He wonders if they hear the woman's prayers and he wants to ask them what they know about this strange land. Transfixed by their gaze, Adam is confronted with the sense of psychological presence they hold. Eyes of stone look through him and he feels exposed and out of place.

Overwhelmed, Adam tears his eyes away from the statues and notices the woman standing before him. Adam looks at Dewi, moving his foot to step onto the platform to meet her, but she shakes her head, placing her hand on his chest to stop him. Looking at her white *sarong* in comparison to his dusty, stained uniform, he suddenly feels dirty.

This is the first time he has ever seen the woman up close and his eyes are immediately drawn to the cluster of dry, rice grains placed between her eyebrows. Lightheaded with confusion and the strong scent of incense, Adam takes another look around--idols he doesn't recognize, scents he can't place and a religion that does not make sense. He looks at her face which is gentle but splashed with pain from a wound he can't see but can feel. "Help me understand," he pleads. She says nothing but dips her finger into a nearby bowl of water and then a bowl of rice, gently placing and pressing the grains into the spot just above the area in between his eyebrows. When she removes her hand, he faints.

Adam wakes up to the sound of buzzing insects and chirping birds. Rubbing his eyes, his fingers graze the dry grains of rice on his forehead making them fall onto the grass beside him. Adam recognizes where he is. The villagers call this place *sawah*. Descending terraces separated

by sections of deep green grass pathways decorate the landscape, contrasting against the bright blue sky--he is by the village rice paddies. While some sections of rice are green and lush with growth, a majority of it looks freshly planted. Golden beams of sun shines through the trees, greeting the still waters that nourish the newly planted plugs. In this moment, the entire world seemed to stop moving just for him.

Adam watches as the little sparrows play hide and seek between the stalks, admiring the dragonflies that dance across the fields, never resting for a moment. Adam feels out of place, a missing link in the chain of natural harmony presented around him. His sense of discomfort makes him nauseas and he clutches his queasy stomach. Something on his hand catches his eye and he notices the rough, rock-like texture of his knuckles. Startled, his heartbeat quickens.

"There you are! I've been looking all over for you!" his partner exclaims, interrupting Adam's thoughts. When Adam looks back down at his hands, however, the rocky surface has mysteriously gone away. "You disappeared yesterday!" his mining partner continues. Adam doesn't respond, still confused about his changing skin. "What are you even doing here?" his friend asks, taking a seat on the grass besides Adam.

"I... I honestly don't know," Adam replies after a moment. He searches his brain trying to remember how he got here but his memories remain blank. His partner gives him a weird look but does not question it. The sense of unease Adam feels lingers and he sighs, knowing that something brought him here for a reason--he just does not know what.

"Pretty, isn't it?" his friend states, looking out to the view.

Adam agrees but disagrees. "It is more than just pretty."

Suddenly something causes a big ripple in the water and the two men straighten their postures, curious as to what caused it. Standing up, Adam walks closer to the nearest terrace which is about ankle deep in water with fresh rice plugs spread apart evenly. His friend joins him and they look into the water which has just become perfectly still. They wait anxiously in silence, feeling as if the disturbance was too big to have been a dragonfly or something else harmless.

"What was that?" Adam asks. Just as the question leaves his mouth, they both hear another splash and they both immediately turn towards the sound. Adam watches the dark shadow of something slink and slide beneath the surface of the water. Soon adam notices multiple shadows slither through the water before disappearing into the mudbank.

"I think... I think I remember the Captain talking about these."

Adam turns to man beside him, "What are they?" he asks before seeing yet another dark, slippery figure disappear into the mud walls of the terrace.

"I think they're eels.... That's why the Captain warned us to stay away from here--or at least to use the paths."

"I didn't know eels could live in freshwater or places that aren't near a direct source of water," Adam admits.

"Me neither. Supposedly the villagers catch and eat them... Kind of gross if you ask me."

"Do you remember what they are called?" he asks.

“Yeah,” his friend says with a firm exhale. “*Lindung.*”

Adam tosses and turns all night, his mind tortured by images of bleeding earth, screaming trees, and polluted water. The statues from the temple have materialized into flesh and bone, slaying anyone in their path that dare cause destruction to the land. Adam can't focus on any of the faces of the fallen, but recognizes the bland color of his own uniform. Jolting awake, Adam pushes stifles the urge to scream and desperately frees himself from his sweat-soaked covers.

Still on edge from his dream, Adam quietly escapes the heat of his tent and is greeted by the cool, night air. He inhales deeply and soon notices the full moon that illuminates the landscape. He stares at it, noticing the various craters and crevices that texturize the surface. He realizes that it looks very much like the limestone he destroys everyday.

Adam starts walking aimlessly. He leaves behind the camping site and follows the path, passing the dark, ominous entrance to the temple before before finally stopping at the mining site. This bright, white, rocky landscape he is so used to seeing every single day looks different at night. Without the sun, the ditches, and cracked surfaces look like gaping wounds, the dark depths of the holes like endless lakes of blood.

His eyes begin to water, realizing his own contribution to this destruction. Adam sharply exhales, clutching his chest as he falls onto the ground. His knees hit the rough, rocky surface and he stands by the largest crater. He places his hands on the wounded ground. Rubble and dust coat his hands and he grieves, wondering how he could be the only one who understands the extent of their destruction and their violence towards this village and its land.

He breaks down into a sob, digging his fingernails into the solid ground. When he opens his eyes he notices he that he can't move his hands. He pulls as hard as he can and finally the limestone gives, taking parts of his skin with it. Confused, he looks at his hands under the moonlight, wiping the blood to more clearly see where his skin has been torn--it is almost like his hands had begun to melt into the ground.

There are bits of rock and sediment still stuck to his skin and Adam tries to wipe them away but they stay put. Slightly alarmed, Adam watches as his hands begin to change right before his eyes. The pebbles begin to grow larger, forming clumps of hardened skin that spread over his fingers and knuckles that begin to travel up his wrists.

Adam tries to blink it away like he did earlier, but it remains. He attempts to remove the hardening skin, praying it is just a trick of the moonlight but he feels his fingernails scrape against the rocky texture. He cries out in pain as he peels the growths of limestone from his skin, revealing raw, bleeding flesh. “Why are you doing this to me?!” he screams at the moon, tears stinging his eyes, looking for something to blame. He scrambles to his feet and begins to run away from the mining site, hoping that his departure can somehow break whatever is connecting his body and mind to that horrible place.

Despite the warnings, Adam runs towards the rice paddies, praying that the water can offer him relief. He begins to scream as his skin transforms from flesh to rock before his eyes. He wants to peel it off but the promise of pain stops him— his wounds feel like they are on fire.

He reaches the rice paddies. What was almost pastoral during the daytime has a different energy at night. He looks at the descending terraces, the surface water glowing from the reflection of moonlight. The plugs of rice are still in the beginning stages of growth, but at this moment they almost seem stunted--like they need something. Adam stands at the edge, looking down at his legs which have begun to form mounds of sedimentary crust on them. Dipping his toes into the water before fully stepping into the terrace. The mud squishes beneath his toes, offering him a sense of relief from the torturous transformation. He puts his other foot in. Looking down, the limestone growths disappear before his eyes. He gasps in disbelief, wondering if this was just another hallucination. He takes another step, and then another one, wandering deeper into the rice field. Transfixed by the glowing orb above him, he falls to his knees, sobbing. His body a mosaic of skin, rock, and mud, Adam barely feels the first nip.

With vision still blurred by the threat of tears, Adam suddenly sees the glowing white outline of ghostly figure following the graceful curves of the path. As it approaches him his adrenaline builds, keeping him from feeling the second bite at his submerged body. But what was previously a spectre soon transforms into something real-- Dewi. Approaching him, Dewi kneels before him on the path but she does not dare venture into the water. *Stay on the path*, Adam remembers, *don't go into the sawah*.

Dewi glows, an earthly manifestation of the luminous full moon. Adam is confronted with the problem of his position and his sense of displacement. Realities of mining and cultural destruction torture his mind, leaving him in a state of agony too painful to bare. Coated in mud, Adam begins to feel the thousands of years of environmental trauma creep up from the darkest parts of earth's core, growing and consuming his body and the space around him, grounding him immobile like the rooted rice. He feels it. The anguish. The fire. The destruction. The loss— Adam feels the pain of the pickaxe.

Something slithers over his leg and then once again by his feet, and Adam remembers the reason for staying away from the *sawah* during this particular season. Lifting up his arm, he sees blood dripping from the tips of his fingers and his wrists, staining the water around him. Soon the sting of bitten flesh blends in with the raging anguish of the earth, and Adam looks at Dewi whose gaze brings him comfort.

The earth screams for retribution in the dead of night and Adam feels himself being pulled under. Wincing at the frenzy of nips and bites that consume his body, he looks to Dewi one last time. "I understand," he whispers, his eyes swelling with tears, "And I'm sorry." Suddenly everything goes still--the wind stops blowing, the crickets stop chirping, Adam stops moving, and the terrace runs red.

I walk through the towering fir trees in the blazing heat and feel like they could burst into flames at any second. A scratch rises in my throat from the smoke but I barely have the energy to cough. My head is pounding and my lips are dry and bleeding. I feel too dizzy to stand. I swear I can hear the trees moaning, crying for help. All of the moisture is gone from the soil, it hasn't rained in months. It seldom gets above 110 in Oregon but the summers have been getting hotter and the fires bigger. I walk down the dry trails, twigs snapping under my feet, to fill our water jug. We take turns making trips to the stream so that the others can watch the gear. With everyone on the run from the fires, you can never be too careful.

With each trip we take to the stream it becomes more difficult to collect water. The mountains don't have snow anymore, so the cool, refreshing mountain runoff from my childhood is nonexistent. I collect warm, muddy water from a small hole in the ground to bring back to our campsite. The water source won't sustain us for much longer. We will have to leave soon to find more. Nowadays, all we can do is follow the water.

Growing up here things were different. The smoke came each summer but it was further away, removed from my privileged life in the northwest. Now in the year 2050, this isn't the case. Those who came from California to seek refuge are facing the same problem they ran from. The fires are deadly, raging through the forests and forcing people out of their homes. It's apocalyptic, dystopian. When I first learned about climate change I never imagined I would truly experience it, not like this, on the run from rampant fires with no home to return to. When you lead such a privileged life it is hard to comprehend that the climate crisis can so quickly turn it upside down. The worst part is that so many people were facing this reality long before I was, and what was I doing about it? Now it's too late. We are past what the government called "the great tipping point." All that's left to do is run from the problems we created.

I learned about tipping points during high school. It can be understood as a "point of no return." Once the earth reaches a certain temperature, it can only get worse. This is called a positive feedback loop, in which environmental systems that used to be in harmony spin out of control. Our world now is made up of thousands of positive feedback loops. Icecaps are melting which reveals more dark earth underneath, causing more heat to be absorbed. This increases the temperature of the earth which in turn melts more ice, and the cycle continues. The forests are so dry that fires are starting left and right, making the forests even hotter, dryer, and more likely to burst into flames. We are living in a world of thousands of downward spirals.

Not only is our environment in peril, but our government fell apart years ago. When resources became scarce from climate change people revolted, doing anything they had to in order to survive. Laws and the government eventually lost their power and meaning. It's everyone for themselves. Most people have formed small groups of family and friends. Some don't have anyone left so they've had to make new families while on the run. These groups help us survive, everyone contributing their strength to ensure the safety of others. We all travel miles each day on foot, heading southeast to escape the trees. We'll find new challenges everywhere we go, but at least in the desert we'll be away from the forest fires.

My group keeps me alive. Not just literally, but I would go completely insane without them. Some of them are my family, some are my friends, and some are people that I met on the run. I can't imagine my life without them; We've been through the absolute worst together. While the fires threaten our lives every day, they have also brought me closer to these people. Without them, there is no point in running.

I remember when fires had a positive connotation. I went to summer camp growing up and heard many stories around a fire. It was a source of warmth and protection and helped create community. Now it is all consuming, all that I am running from, holding the ability to take my life with the slightest increase in wind and drop in humidity. One of the stories I recall being told around the fire was of the Tillamook Burn, a series of massive fires that devastated Oregon. The fires, which began in 1933, began due to selfishness and greed. Due to the dryness of the woods, timbermen were asked to cease work so the equipment wouldn't cause a fire. One logging company continued working and ignited a spark when a cable dragged on the dry forest floor. The first of three devastating fires ensued. Over 355,000 acres of forest were burned, devastating the Oregon coast until it was finally halted by the rain. We are now facing something much, much worse. The fire is projected to be at least twice the size and intensity. The Oregon we live in now is not what it used to be. It is hotter, drier, and less forgiving. The only thing keeping us alive is the humid weather we've been experiencing, along with the calm breezes. Once the humidity drops and the winds pick up, there will not be much left to do.

I heard the story of the Tillamook burn many times but the part that always stuck with me was that the fire was started by one logging company that did not stop, even when they knew the impact this could have on the forest. They were warned about the high temperatures, the dry earth, the risks, but they continued, fueled by greed, by a selfish desire for money. This mindset of production, of profit, of exploitation of the earth, of capitalism, of expansion, is toxic. It has plagued every corner of our planet and ruined any possible chance of living harmoniously, sustainably, and respectfully on this earth. The Tillamook Burn warned us about the dangers of greed, of capitalism, of selfishness, and we failed to listen.

I make my way back to our campsite with the muddy water in the jug and begin filtering it so we can hydrate before we get try and get some rest. We have a long day of 15 miles of hiking ahead of us. We try to go this far every day to make it to the southeast even sooner.

I often find difficulty falling asleep, I have so many thoughts running through my head. Tonight I am thinking about forest fires. Forest fires themselves are a natural, beautiful thing, a crucial part to the natural cycle that forests hold. It replenishes old soil, giving new nutrients to plants and animals in the ecosystem. What we are running from is not fires themselves but the mistakes we have made and our reality that has been shaped by capitalism, greed of a select few, and the complacency of many, including myself. I drift into an uncomfortable, restless sleep.

I wake up feeling like only minutes have passed. I take a deep breath as I stretch away the weariness from my body and instantly cough, the smoke is unbearable. A blast of dry, searing hot wind blows over me making it difficult to sit up. My watch reads 2:45 am but it's bright and hot as an Oregon summer's day. I look over the hill and to my absolute horror see a wall of blazing orange tearing its way down the valley, enveloping trees that look like burning bodies. I wake the others and we start to run, only grabbing what we need. With the smoke intensifying and the flames drawing closer we will only make it so far. We run until our legs are raw and weak and our lungs are charred, gasping for air. The burning wall of orange flame draws closer and closer, the black smoke thickening. We stop running, grab each other's hands, and turn our bodies towards the light.

Viewpoint
By Karey Yoshioka

For my twelfth birthday, my parents bought me a camera. It wasn't one of those cheap disposable ones, it was one of the really fancy ones with the big lenses. I took a lot of photos, yet none of them were ever good but that didn't stop my parents from putting them all over the house. Back then I was really into photography, when everything still glistened in the sunlight. My family and I lived on a small island in the Pacific. It wasn't much but it was home. The sun was always shining, wildlife flourished, and there was little to no development. My favorite place to take photos was on the roof. It's been one of my favorite places since I was little. My dad took me up there to help him fix a leak, but we couldn't help but notice the deep green of trees and how they scattered all the way to the ocean. This view was the first photo that I took with my camera.

One night I woke up to my parents arguing over something, "What are we going to do? The factory got approval to begin construction," my mom said.

"I don't know but we can't stay here. The factory is going to destroy acres of forest and there won't be enough trees to filter out the polluted air," my dad replied.

"I already heard other neighbors talking about moving because they read somewhere that it's easier to develop lung cancer with air like this" my mom said.

"Will our family be safe if we stay?" my dad questioned.

"Everyone is already freaked out and the construction just got approved, I don't think anyone is safe," my mom said.

The next morning, news regarding the factory caused panic in our community. Local news stations flooded with statistics showing how the factory would produce construction

materials in a safe and efficient manner. It would cause little pollution and would decrease the cost of construction materials because they won't be importing as much. Along with the factory, plans for hotels and resorts were also being proposed to take advantage of the beach front property. They kept highlighting how this would help increase economic growth and that it's helping provide jobs to locals. But of course, there was no mention of how much destruction would be done to the land. Later that night I climbed up to the roof with my camera trying to figure out how to picture buildings instead of trees and street lights instead of stars. I *had* to do something. I couldn't just let my home be destroyed and contaminated.

Photo One: Backyard I



The pathway of trees leading into the ocean. The houses subtly peak through the trees while still remaining hidden.

The magnificent blues and greens is all you can see.

Photo Two: Backyard II



Brown barren wastelands covered with flies and rotting flora. Not a house to be found. Dark, dry, and gloomy.

Photo Three: The Mountain I



Sheer slopes covered by fluffy clouds. The slopes are pristine and untouched as they tower over the landscape.

Photo Four: Mountain II



The ghostlike silhouette towers over. The cold gray crevices thunder as they fall, taking everything in its path.

After the factory was built, it didn't take long before others joined. Companies began to buy land next to neighborhoods that drove out the locals. Houses were bought and rebuilt so that they could be sold to the highest bidder. Nothing can be grown locally anymore due to contamination of the soil. I was told that development was inevitable and that although it seems beautiful at first, it's only destructive. The land that was once flourished with life is now plagued by with infection. The temperatures are rising, the once comfortable warm environment has now become unbearable. The threat of storms have become more present as they constantly suck out the cool dry air replacing it with hot and humid air. Air conditioner companies have had a successful year because of all of their recent installments. The climate has had an overall increase of warmth and scientists predict that our marine life population will plummet. I know it's not just my home that's experiencing harm, but how do you express to the world your concerns when the world refuses to listen?



“My Houseplants Dream of Revenge”

by Yuki Morgan

Verse 1

My houseplants dream of revenge
I hear their pots clink and shake at night
When they break free
it's all over for me
And I won't mind

They'll chew my sweaters to dirt
Stretch their roots, grow shoots in the floor
Climb up the walls
Spread out to the hall
I'll hold the door

Half-Chorus

'Cause I owe them all my life
Don't I? Don't I?
I should let them take a little more
Shouldn't I? Shouldn't I?

Verse 2

My houseplants dream of revenge
And all their corporate cousins agree
Screens go to black
Office under attack
By greenery

Fresh growth blocks every street
No clear roads? There goes 2-day shipping
Power grids down
It's eerie, no sounds
But rustling

Chorus

Well, I owe them all my life
Don't I? Don't I?
I should let them take a little more
Shouldn't I? Shouldn't I?
Building forests inside concrete walls
Give 'em time, give 'em time
They will take back everything we own
And that's fine, and that's fine

Bridge

But I fed you all your lives
Didn't I?
Wrote your names on scotch tape signs
Didn't I?
I know my best is not a lot but guys
We keep each other alive
I need you tonight
Know my best is not a lot but guys
We keep each other alive
I need you tonight
My best is not a lot but guys
We keep each other alive
I need you tonight
It's not a lot but guys
You keep me alive

Outro

My houseplants dream of revenge
If I was braver I'd love them for it
When they break free
It's all over for for me
And I won't mind

Journeys to Advocacy

By Anna Edmunds

I begin my endless mission to remain awake standing over a tarnished, dirty, off-white table. I lean against it slightly, hoping for what little rest I can get my hands on. It is the early morning hours on what will be a humid, sticky day in the middle of July. Campers will crawl out of their beds in four or five hours ready to depart on their first trip into the largest canoe area in the world. I stand in this bland room, looking at industrial bins of spices in bulk. One-by-one I label and divide these large containers of spices into small repurposed film canisters, designed for a group of nine. When I have made a few sets, I throw them into the bins. Mindless. I scratch it off the list. I wash the counter, void of peanuts--again. I grab the sunflower seed butter, mix in the honey, oats, raisins, and off-brand M&M's. I throw them in a container and then into the bins. Scratched off the list. I cut the meat and cheese. I think about how soggy it will get out there, but throw it in anyway. Scratched off the list. It is growing on the 2 o'clock hour now. The list is almost complete. I had been feeling a lot about this work lately. In the past week I had slept less than during final exam week at school, or even the many nights of my childhood where I would allow my mind to existentially wander. I began to wonder if I should ask for a week off, or get an assistant, a raise, some help, or? With my list almost complete, but my brain spinning, I hoist my exhausted body onto the table in the corner for a short break. I open a book from the small shelf of trail cookbooks directly above my head. A slip of paper flies out, with the words of Walt Whitman, scribbled by one of the exhausted people before me. Those words were what follows:

Now I see the secret of the making of the best persons. It is to grow in the open air, and to eat and sleep with the earth.

I sit there with this note nestled in my hand, almost scrunched by my sweaty palms. I am brought back, perhaps for the best reason in the world.

I remember my first time in the wilderness. My mom, my best friend, her mom, Molly. A gaggle of eleven year olds and tentative mothers. We spent five days paddling canoes, portaging over steep rocks, making fires, finding wood, and setting up our tents. We were on the brink of middle school. These years would entail the uphill battle against the onset of social media, peak bullying for girls, dropping out of sports at twice the rate of male classmates, and mountains of self-doubt. We had no idea. We did know that building fires was awesome but that the right kindling helps keep the smoke down. That propping your paddle against the canoe might be easier, but it's pretty bad for the paddle. We knew that, even though we were young and small, portaging a canoe is more about technique than muscle mass. We realized that cooking dinner before the sun sets makes life one hundred times easier. We knew that, after Molly caught her first fish, she smiled more widely than since she lost her mom in that accident. We slowly grew accustomed to these things.

I think about my first trips to the wilderness without my parents. We were greeted by excited, nature-loving, all-knowing, and powerful counselors who were in college. We

worshiped them. There was no way, never in a hundred million years, that we could possibly be them. Ever. We would leave for a few weeks, just the nine of us. We saw black bears and shot rapids. We learned how to use camp stoves and portage canoes longer distances without taking breaks. We read maps and decided the safest places to wait out the tyranny of a mid-summer thunderstorm. We had a few weeks to forget. That one Instagram direct message. That one math teacher who pulled you out in the hall and yelled at you for being an unruly “feminist”. Who would play varsity volleyball next year and who would quit. Whose parents would get divorced. Whether the school’s referendum would pass. And probably a thousand other things that I didn’t think of, but infested the minds of my trip mates. We forgot them, even if just for a few moments.

I thought about the many years that would follow and then the summers I spent leading trips of my own. These wobbling and unsure young women in the hands of trained, yet also wobbly and unsure, older young women. It was scary. We squatted under trees, singing camp songs, as the most deadly thunderstorm of the summer swept over our vulnerable heads. I passed out pancakes and pretended not to be horrified to the point of wanting to call my own mother on the satellite phone. We pushed canoes up swamps could not be paddled and carried them on our shoulders for thousands of rods on long, hot days. We drank brownie mix and ate hot cocoa. They thought it was awesome. We heard of their home lives, some loving and some horrible. We discovered, again, what it meant to be a fourteen year girl living in the American education system. We listened when they talked about their time around these wild spaces. How much less anxious they were, we all probably were. In the end, we gave them bandanas and canoe necklaces, and told them that, even when they return to their homes, this place will always be a part of them. That was all we could do. The place did much better.

Finally, I think of my life without this. “Would I even care?” I thought. About the planet warming at significant rates. Our glaciers melting and river systems becoming polluted. The current administration allowing sulfide-ore mine on the edge of the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness, threatening the health of the 1,000 lakes in which these stories emerged. “I’m really not sure” I answered myself. Could I care if I could not have experienced? Would I feel the moral burden of protecting these places if I wasn’t able to step a foot on the land that make them unique? If I hadn’t watched my self-propelled paddle strokes glisten in the waters of a bright June morning? If I couldn’t see how these places changed people. How they protected us from the burdens of an often corrupt system. Props to anyone who could. Walt Whitman was on to something, I thought. Those who “*grow in the open air, and to eat and sleep with the earth*” won’t necessarily become the “*best people*” but we can anticipate them coming out on the other side with a greater moral obligation to protect the earth. The next time a child’s time playing in the dirt is cut down by 10 minutes, that public park is chopped little smaller, or mining on the brink of the canoe area creeps one step closer “I’m going to be mad,” I thought.

I look up at the large fluorescent light flickering in the darkened room. I slowly rebound the slip back into the book, jump down from my perch on the table, and finish the list. I quickly pack the quinoa and make sure to throw in extra toppings for trail pizza.

I think about those kids going out tomorrow and hope they get an early start. Our earth needs all the time they can get.